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PROTECTING OUR SPIES

On Naming
C.I.A. Agents

We present *a Nation first*—the first article in this journal that has ever been cleared for publication by an agency of the Federal Government, in this case the Central Intelligence Agency.

Because of the misreporting, loose allegations and general fuzziness surrounding the debate over the naming of C.I.A. agents, and the fact that extremely dubious and dangerous legislation—the *Intelligence Identities Protection bill*, on which hearings begin April 7 in the House—may be enacted as a result, we asked Philip Agee, himself a former C.I.A. agent who has made something of a specialty of naming his quondam colleagues, to explain why he does it, and what he thinks is wrong with the current bill, which would outlaw the practice.

Agee, who resides in Hamburg, West Germany, agreed to write the article but informed us that he is under a court injunction which compels him to clear anything he writes about the intelligence field with the Agency itself, lest he be judged in contempt. Under these circumstances, we agreed to publish Agee's essay (which, as it happens, the C.I.A. let stand pretty much as he wrote it) and invited a group of experts to discuss the issues he raises. Their observations start on page 299, with the exception of former C.I.A. Director William Colby who, after reading the Agee essay, declined to participate.

—The Editors

PHILIP AGEE

The purpose of our cover in many places is not to fool the K.G.B.,” former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Frank Carlucci told the Senate Judiciary Committee last September. Rather, cover is needed to preserve C.I.A. operations from “detection by local authorities” and from “foreign political outcry.” Carlucci added that good cover is needed to give the U.S. Government “plausible denial” of C.I.A. operations and insure that the Agency can continue to recruit informants. Carlucci was saying, in other words, that good cover is needed to enable the Agency and American ambassadors to tell more believable lies, and to help C.I.A. officers cozy up to foreigners under false pretenses.

The Deputy Director was testifying in favor of S. 2216,

the *Intelligence Identities Protection bill*, and many others. The bill, caused by agents—primarily the C.I.A.—to protect information from disclosure to Congress, is almost identical to the *Intelligence Oversight and Justice Act*. It is reasonable to fear that the 97th Congress, if it passes the bill, will disclose information about the C.I.A. and its agents, informants, and the like.

The C.I.A. claims that the bill makes it more difficult to protect people who might be targeted for assassination. It will be made public because they do not want to have become re-

covers of many C.I.A. operations. Their effectiveness can serve abroad. Services in many countries have become increasingly aware of, and sensitive to, the C.I.A. presence in American embassies and consulates, thus making operations more difficult to conceal, more cumbersome and, in some cases, more dangerous.

The C.I.A. and its supporters in Congress stress that the proposed law is aimed solely at a malicious little group of troublemakers who specialize in naming names—mainly, myself and Louis Wolf, editor of the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. The question of whether the bill’s narrow intent makes it an unconstitutional bill of attainder aside, it could easily be applied against the mainstream media once the “traitors” are silenced. The long-run result would be an end to practically all extra-official exposures in the media of scandals and abuses based on information from insiders—which is where almost all the important exposures originate. The C.I.A. denies, of course, that this is its purpose, but the potential usefulness of such a law to them in protecting cover and regaining adequate overall secrecy is undeniable. As a result, practically all the mainstream media have come out in opposition to S. 2216.

There can be no doubt that an end to exposure of the C.I.A. in the major media would be a grievous loss. Consider the historical impact of Thomas Ross and David Wise’s book *The Invisible Government*, the 1967 revelations of all the financial conduits and institutional penetrations, the 1974 revelations of the Chilean subversion and domestic crimes, the leak of the Pike report in 1976, the 1977 revelations of various chiefs of state on the Agency’s payroll and the series the same year on the C.I.A.’s penetrations of the media. That reporting gave unique insights into the C.I.A.’s methods, and without the 1974 revelations there would probably never have been a Rockefeller Commission, a Church committee or a Pike committee.

Under the proposed law, however, most of that main-

Philip Agee is a former C.I.A. officer who wrote *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (Bantam, 1975). He now lives in Hamburg, West Germany. In 1979 the Department of State revoked his passport and the case is currently under consideration.

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